

Soldiers *Online*



Temples and shrines in Tokyo's Asakusa district are symbolic of old Tokyo.

Serving in the Land of the *Rising Sun*

Story and Photos by Heike Hasenauer

IN Japan, a land known for its fascinating history and ancient traditions, contradictions are an inevitable part of modern-day life.

Petite women in colorful kimonos grace the busy streets of Tokyo's famed Ginza shopping district. Home to some 12 million people, the capital city is a showcase of dazzling neon lights and huge video screens collocated with Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines.

In the Asakusa area of the city, shiny black rickshaws dash across busy intersections, where young women in miniskirts and knee-high

boots wait at a crosswalk near the entrance to Senso-ji Temple.

And in the streets around the walled Imperial Palace, home of Japan's imperial family, black-suited businessmen clutching cell phones and briefcases traverse the clogged streets on bicycles, en route to steel and glass skyscrapers that are monuments to some of Japan's manufacturing giants.

Many people identify Japan as the "Land of the Rising Sun," home of Mount Fuji, sumo wrestling and sushi.

"What most people don't know about Japan is that the U.S. Army has a presence here," said MG Alan D. Johnson, commander of U.S. Army, Japan, headquartered at Camp Zama, about an hour's subway ride from Tokyo.

Some 2,000 soldiers round out a joint U.S. force composed primarily of sailors, airmen and marines, most of them stationed on Okinawa, said USARJ spokesman LTC Steven Boylan.

USARJ soldiers perform critical roles to support U.S. Army, Pacific, headquartered in Hawaii, and strengthen ties with Japan, thereby protecting a potential wartime base of operations in the eastern Pacific, Johnson said.

Together with 2,000 Department of the Army civilians and about 3,000



A modern-day rickshaw can still be one of the best — and quickest — ways to get around Tokyo.

Japanese civilian employees, the soldiers store ammunition for two mechanized divisions and maintain war-reserve stocks and humanitarian-aid equipment.

Additionally, they operate a port from which the Third Marine Expeditionary Force would deploy in war, and process and provide all the fuel for the joint services' military vehicles, aircraft and

vessels, and AAFES gas stations, Boylan added.

Army veterinarians in Japan support all the military services, inspecting food and caring for pets. And the Japan Engineer District coordinates construction totaling about \$1 billion annually.

Soldiers from the 35th Supply and Service Bn., part of the 17th Area Support Group, establish intermediate staging bases for soldiers deployed to Japan for training, and provide the food, fuel, equipment and services to sustain them.

"We could be called to set up an intermediate staging base to facilitate forces arriving from the United States in response to contingencies anywhere in the Pacific Theater," said battalion commander LTC Dwayne Thomas.

In such a contingency, prepositioned equipment would be waiting at Sagami Depot, near Camp Zama, for 25th Infantry Division units



Women wearing traditional Japanese clothing are still a common sight, even in Tokyo's ultramodern Ginza district.



Soldiers from the 17th Area Support Group don MOPP-4 gear during training at Camp Zama.

from Hawaii, which would be the first to arrive in Japan, Johnson said. Individual Mobilization Augmentees and Reservists would supplement USARJ units, to permit round-the-clock operations.

U.S.-Japanese Interoperability

“Bilateral engagements are among our most important functions in preparation for potential contingencies,” Boylan said.

The U.S.-Japanese meetings can range from Boylan meeting with his counterpart to talk about producing a news program, to full-blown exercises with U.S. forces arriving from Alaska and Hawaii. Most Japanese favor the U.S. presence in Japan, due largely to

these exchanges, Boylan said.

As an indication of its support, Japan spends roughly \$5 billion annually in cost-sharing for USARJ, Johnson said. “They pay for our buildings and provide a large part of our work force.

“Japan is our most powerful ally in the Pacific region,” he added. It ranks number two in gross national product and has a modern army, some 180,000 strong, outfitted with equipment manufactured in the United States or in Japan, with U.S. specifications.

Japanese Ground Self Defense Force

“We have exclusively defense-oriented forces. So we don’t train our soldiers in infantry tactics,” said Capt.



American and Japanese soldiers each raise their nation’s flag at Camp Imazu, the site of regular bilateral training.

Tetsuro Kagao, executive officer of the Japanese Ground Self Defense Force's 3rd Co., 15th Inf. Regiment. "And Japanese NCOs don't have the authority NCOs in the U.S. Army have."

Another difference between the two armies is that the U.S. military frequently deploys outside the United States, but Japanese forces seldom leave Japan, said COL Sidney Riley, USARJ's deputy chief of staff for operations.

"JGSDF soldiers participate in U.N.-mandated missions, such as operations in East Timor and the Golan Heights, and disaster relief in Honduras. But, they are prohibited by their constitution from conducting bilateral training outside Japan," Riley explained.

Despite the differences, including "somewhat of a language barrier," Kagao said, "we do have much in common with U.S. soldiers, such as loyalty to country and national pride."

"The Japanese ground force, relative to the area it has to cover, isn't at all large," Riley said, but Japan is trying to expand its reserve forces and create laws that would compel employers to support reservists.

USARJ Training

While USARJ soldiers primarily support training between the JGSDF and U.S. soldiers who deploy to Japan,



On the way home after class, uniformed school children walk through the shopping street that leads to the Asakusa district's Senso-ji temple.

those activities also enhance their own combat training. Aviators participate in field exercises, transporting fuel, ammunition and personnel. Ordnance specialists transport and issue ammunition, and medical and administrative personnel and others perform the countless other functions critical to success on the battlefield.

USARJ soldiers also use weekly "Sergeant's Time" to hone common skills.

Peacetime Operations

"Just because we're on the opposite side of the world, doesn't mean we're immune from events that occur far away," Boylan said. USARJ, too, has supported humanitarian efforts in East Timor, and has sent people to Bosnia and other places.

Following such natural disasters as typhoons, floods and earthquakes, the command has sent humanitarian-aid supplies and assistance to Vietnam, the Philippines, Cambodia and Russia, he said.



PFC Fernando Rivas tests the drinking water at Camp Imazu during a recent field exercise.

Cultural Differences

"As is true of any Army assignment, there are pros and cons to a tour in Japan," said SGT Matthew Cartlidge, flight-scheduling NCOIC for the 78th Avn. Bn. Some soldiers and family members "hide on Camp Zama," he said, "because they can pretend they're in the United States."

"Virtually everything they're accustomed to in the States is available on post," said Johnson. "They can go from Army post to Air Force base to Navy base, all in several hours, and spend their entire tour in Japan doing that. You really have to be adventurous here. If you're not, you can become a hermit."

Venturing out alone can initially be confusing and very frightening. "It's the first time many of us have felt illiterate, because we don't know the language and can't read the signs," Johnson said. But many Japanese speak English, because they start learning it in middle school.

"Experiencing a culture halfway around the world is different from anything you've experienced before," said Cartlidge. "The Japanese are shyer than Westerners. Unless you go out and try to learn about them and show an interest in their culture, they're not likely to try to teach you."

"Experiencing a culture halfway around the world is different from anything you've experienced before," said SGT Matthew Cartlidge.



Pigeons flock for a free meal of seeds outside this five-story pagoda in Tokyo's Asakusa district. It's a replica of one built in 942.



A vendor in the Asakusa shopping district displays the various types of noodles for sale in his small street-side shop.

For those who do venture out, opportunities for sightseeing, shopping, participating in sports and enjoying artfully prepared foods are endless, Riley added.

"I have 26 years in the Army, and this definitely is my most interesting assignment," Riley said. "I've made many close Japanese friends."

The Japanese and Americans also



host respective annual social events. Japan boasts many traditional celebrations, with lavish parades and colorful costumes. And in spring, Camp Zama, like many other areas in Japan, looks like a picture postcard of endless cherry blossoms.

Some wives frequent “shrine sales,” flea markets sponsored by the churches, to find Japanese antiques. Others like to frequent “recycle” shops for discarded treasures, among them the famed Japanese dolls and ceramics.

In lieu of making the roughly 20-hour journey to the States when they’re on leave, many soldiers take military hops to Singapore, Australia, Thailand, Alaska and Hawaii, Johnson said. And he recently reinstituted a four-day-weekend policy to encourage more soldiers and families to see Japan.

Driving is a challenge because the Japanese drive on the left side of the street. And roads are very narrow, Cartlidge added. “It can take two hours to travel 20 miles.”

The Japanese consider every driver a “professional driver,” said SPC Julia Simpkins, of the USARJ Public Affairs Office. “Therefore, all parties involved in an accident are at fault.”

“Even if a Japanese driver hits me from behind while I’m stopped at a red light, I would be at fault, just because I



U.S. government employees at Camp Zama take an afternoon stroll through the American housing area.

was there,” Cartlidge added. “And if you hurt someone in an accident, you visit them in the hospital and bring flowers. That’s a must.”

Other peculiarities relate to the work place. For those used to conducting business quickly, Japan could be a lesson in patience, Johnson said.

“What could be done in a one-hour briefing in the States can take a day here.

Rarely will someone come to my office and flatly state their business. It’s a long time before the person will get to the point.”

When Johnson visits a Japanese facility, there’s typically an arrival ceremony, a short briefing, an elaborate dinner and entertainment, he said.

One of the best perks for soldiers in Japan is the cost-of-living allowance to offset high prices on the local economy. “Some soldiers receive as much as \$1,500 a month in COLA,” said Cartlidge.

“Soldiers can save a great deal of money here, invest it and use part of it to experience Asia,” Simpkins said. “There’s a whole other world to be explored here. It includes everything from sacred temples and shrines to the country’s famed hot springs and traditional baths.”

Tokyo’s Ginza shopping district boasts upscale shops, neon lights and dozens of huge video screens.

MWR makes traveling easier and less costly by providing low-cost van rentals and vouchers that preclude drivers from having to pay expensive tolls, Johnson said. Getting from Camp Zama to Tokyo’s Norita Airport costs about \$50 in tolls.

For those who want to explore Tokyo, the New Sanno Hotel in the center of the city, operated by the joint U.S. forces, provides first-class accommodations at affordable prices, he said.

The city’s elaborate subway system is confusing at first, but Army Community Services provides orientation classes that explain the various types of trains and costs. White-gloved attendants can sometimes be seen waiting on the subway platforms to gently push

riders into the cars so the doors will close. At peak hours, people are squashed together like schools of Koi gathering for crumbs.

“It takes people who have been here for a while to teach the newly arrived people the customs,” Johnson said. “We tell our soldiers, ‘Go out there.’ If you show an interest in the country and its people, the Japanese will bend over backwards to make you feel at home. They’re very proud people — proud of their customs, culture and history. If you show an interest, they’ll inundate you with invitations to show you around.” □



Debra Fleming — wife of Camp Zama orthodontist Dr. (MAJ) David Fleming — and her daughter ride a bus to Tokyo.



Aviators in Asia

Story and Photos by Heike Hasenauer

CW3 Jeff Austin, pilot in command of a UH-60 Black Hawk, conferred frequently with his co-pilot during a recent flight from Camp Zama, Japan, to Camp Imazu, a remote Japanese training site some two hours away.

At U.S. Army, Japan, headquarters, another sunny day welcomed U.S. soldiers. At Austin's destination, officials reported heavy rain and limited visibility.

He knew the report could change quickly on the mountainous island, where activity in the Sea of Japan influenced each day's weather outlook.

As the UH-60 continued its flight over the lush green cliffs, they seemed to ebb and flow like the ocean tide as the aircraft alternately approached steep ranges, then deep valleys. One moment the peaks reached skyward, like groping fingers from the ground. The next minute, cloud masses appeared as white ghosts in a desert, blocking all other sights.

As Austin passed Mt. Fuji on his left, a rainbow appeared in front of the aircraft, then the flight continued over isolated cliffs, winding waterways and



(Main photo) Fabled Mount Fuji is a frequent sight for Army aviators in Japan. **(Right)** As CW3 Jeff Austin pilots his UH-60 Black Hawk near the volcano, a rainbow appears to frame it in the aircraft's windshield.



Aviators of the 78th Aviation Battalion get the chance to see many places of scenic and historic interest during their tours in Japan.

compact villages of houses with various-colored rooftops.

Soldiers assigned to the only Army aviation element in Japan, the 78th Aviation Battalion, fly missions across the island and elsewhere in the Pacific Theater, said battalion commander LTC James Coates.

The unit has fixed- and rotary-wing aircraft and is the only Army unit in the Pacific that has jets, Coates said. One C-12 and two UC-35s are attached from the Korea-based 17th Avn. Brigade to round out Coates' outfit. Black Hawks are the only Army helicopters permanently based in Japan — should other types be needed, they would come from Hawaii, Alaska or Korea.

"We're a small battalion — 100 people compared to an attack battalion that typically has 250," said Coates. Yet the unit supports all USARJ elements, and others within the Defense Department as tasked by USARJ.

"In a week's time, we may be flying missions with the Navy and Air Force or supporting the U.S. Embassy in Japan," Coates said. In 2000, the unit flew the secretary of defense and

secretary of state and routinely transported the commander in chief, U.S. Pacific Command, and other high-ranking officials within the Pacific Theater.

Air transport cuts by about three-fourths the time people would spend using ground transportation in very congested areas of Japan. A 20-minute flight eliminates five or six hours on the ground, Coates said.

The battalion also supports annual exercises in Japan and the Philippines. In November 2000, the unit supported the annual Keen Sword exercise involving soldiers of the Hawaii-based 25th Infantry Division and Japanese Ground Self Defense Forces, hauling some 1.5 tons of fuel, transporting key exercise participants and standing ready to evacuate casualties during live-fire exercises.

"We have to ask ourselves, 'What does it mean to Japan if Korea has a conflict?'" Coates said. "That's what we've trained for. We have a viable support mission in Japan to fly supply missions, delivering ammunition, explosives, mail and other cargo to the troops."

The battalion also supports air-assault operations, inserting and extracting U.S. soldiers and marines stationed on Okinawa and in the Philippines and supports special forces operations.

Should there be casualties as a result of medical emergency or natural disaster, the 78th would transport patients. While the unit is not a medical assistance to safety and traffic unit that primarily transports soldiers and family members facing medical emergencies, it does perform urgent transports, Coates said.

Two flight crews are on 12-hour rotating shifts to ensure emergency transportation is always available. Recently, aviators of the 78th transported a pregnant woman to an area hospital. She'd been so close to giving birth that the child was born in the

hospital elevator, Coates said. Because it was a breach birth, which required immediate medical attention, the airlift might well have saved a life.

"In some areas of Japan — on the outskirts of Tokyo — some people have never seen an American. When they see us in uniform, it's like they've been introduced to a whole new world," Coates continued. "That we are their friends is something they have read about and seen on TV, but never experienced first-hand."

Additionally, battalion aviators provide humanitarian aid following disasters such as floods, earthquakes and typhoons.

"The flight time our pilots get is probably three times greater than what they would get in the States," Coates said.

"In 2000 the battalion's helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft collectively flew more hours per airframe, and its aircrews more hours per individual aviator, than any other unit in the Pacific," Coates said. □



Much of the scenery in densely populated Japan, of course, is composed of cities, industrial areas and the highways and railways that crisscross the island nation.

Comrades in Kure

Story and Photos by Heike Hasenauer

AS the only Army unit in southern mainland Japan, the 83rd Ordnance Battalion has two equally important main missions: to provide ammunition to the entire Pacific Theater, and to foster community relations in the area, said Takuyoshi Agawa, a local national and general manager of the battalion's headquarters in Kure.

Battalion assets include ammunition depots at Hiro, Akizuki and Kawakami. The largest, at Kawakami, houses some 14,000 short tons of conventional ammunition on 645 acres and is the site of a deactivation facility and repair and maintenance facility.

"Because of our strong involvement in the community, the Japanese are very supportive of these facilities. There could easily be a public outcry about us having an ammunition storage facility 30 kilometers from where we dropped the first atomic bomb," said CPT Todd Harrison, commander of Headquarters & HQs. Detachment. Harrison was stationed in Kure from 1987 to 1990. He is again heavily

involved in the battalion's support of a local orphanage, as are most of the 17 soldiers stationed in Kure. Ninety percent of the battalion workforce, located at four sub-installations, is Japanese, Agawa said.

"For Christmas, the Harbor Club on the U.S. military installation hosts a party for the kids. For Halloween, we go to the orphanage, bringing the holiday to them," said Harrison. His wife is Japanese, and his two children attend Japanese school.

"When I was here before, I had a lot of contact with the Japanese mariners," Harrison added. Most of the soldiers in the unit mingle with the Japanese Maritime Self Defense Force personnel, whose facilities surround the U.S. installation on three sides. JMSDF ships and submarines are moored beyond a sea wall outside the U.S. BOQ that doubles as single-soldier quarters.

Those who are assigned to the headquarters live on an installation that consists of only four buildings. There's only a very small commissary, and no



A Japanese employee at one of the battalion's three ammunition depots checks a line of AT-4 launchers. The largest of the depots houses some 14,000 short tons of munitions.



Members of the 83rd Ordnance Battalion talk with Japanese Maritime Self Defense Force personnel, whose ships are moored near the American BOQ.

post exchange. The few amenities include tennis and racquetball courts, a sauna and a roof-top Jacuzzi that overlooks Japan's Inland Sea.

Because the installation is so small, "we take a boat to our ammunition maintenance site to run PT as a unit," Harrison said. And a van arrives every Sunday to transport soldiers and families to church. Twice a month, a chaplain visits Kure.

Among the other drawbacks of being assigned to such a remote post is that "we're not afforded the civilian education opportunities other soldiers have," said SSG Daryl Harris, a senior personnel sergeant, referring to actual in-class university programs. "They're just not available here."

Soldiers can enroll in the increasingly popular distance-learning courses, but Harris said the soldier-students often don't complete the coursework without the encourage-

ment and interaction of an instructor.

Shopping and dining on the economy are expensive. A medium pizza, for example, costs roughly \$30, said Harris. The cheapest haircut on the economy costs about \$25.

"And with only 17 soldiers stationed in Kure, we have to find things to do," Harris said. "It gets lonely. There's a lot of redundancy. You see the same faces all the time."

Harris fills some of his spare time teaching English to Japanese marines and sailors.

"What offsets some of the limitations and isolation, which could affect morale, is the high cost-of-living allowance we receive," Harris said. "It's probably the highest COLA in the Army."

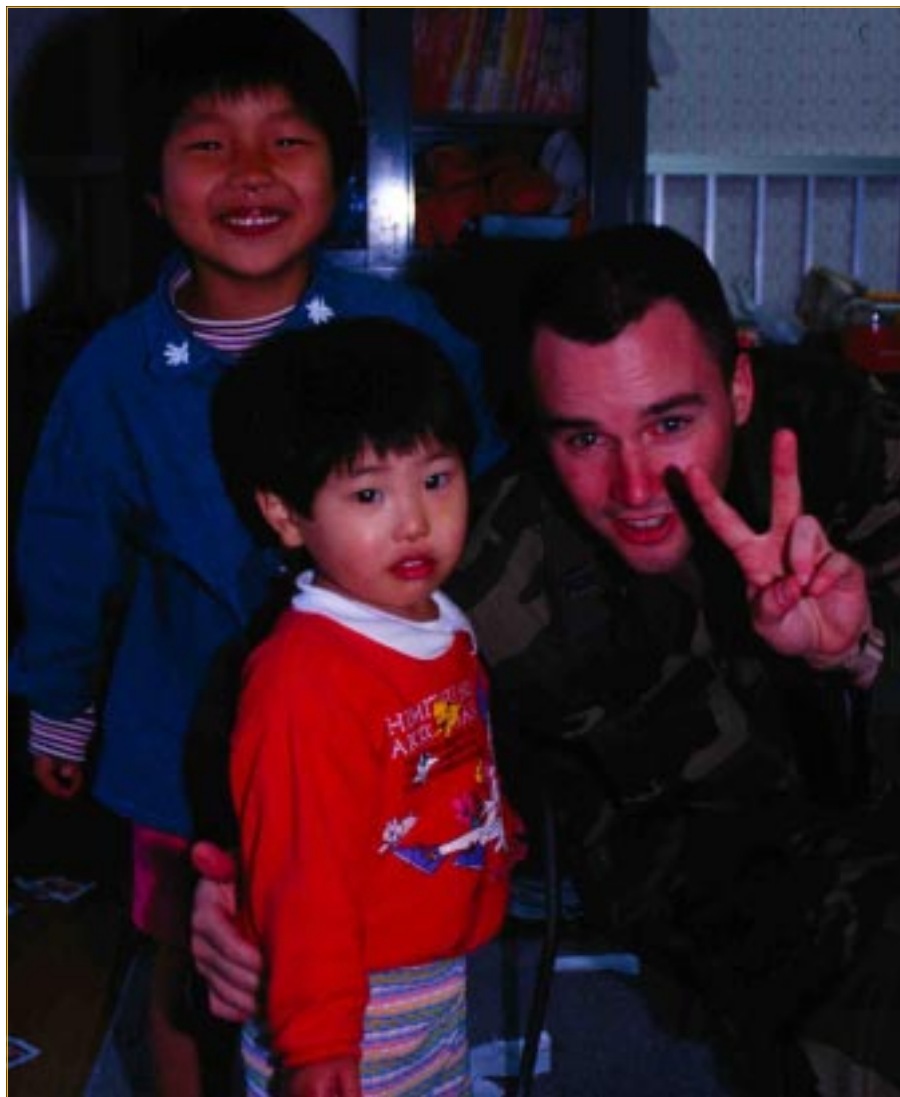
COLA is high because the only U.S. military support near Kure is two hours away, at a Marine Corps facility, said SGM Charles Bumpers. "It's two hours to an ATM machine. Two hours to get a U.S. military haircut, dental or medical care, and an American hamburger."

But soldiers can travel to that post for the weekend, as Harris does, "to take advantage of everything we don't have in Kure."

Four-day weekends, encouraged by the commander of U.S. Army, Japan, allow soldiers to catch free flights to Okinawa and elsewhere. And command-wide mandatory time set aside every Wednesday afternoon gives soldiers and families the opportunity to enjoy their tour together.

Tours in Kure are typically one year, unaccompanied, and two years, accompanied. On Okinawa, as at Camp Zama, headquarters for USARJ, the tour length is three years, accompanied.

"We do common-task training and weapons qualification, but we don't have the opportunity to send a company to the field to support a battal-



CPT Todd Harrison, commander of the 83rd Ord. Bn. Headquarters and HQs. Detachment, is among the soldiers stationed in Kure who regularly visit the children at a local orphanage.

ion," Bumpers said, describing the training challenges. When USARJ's 35th Supply and Service Bn. went to support Exercise Keen Sword, recently, the 83rd Ord. Bn. sent one soldier.

SSG Bruce Stevenson is one of two military police soldiers attached to the 83rd to provide security.

"I went from having a squad of 10 soldiers in a deployable unit at Fort Polk, La., to supervising a civilian guard force. I love it," Stevenson said. "The civilian employees go out of their way to make us feel at home. All we have to do is make a suggestion, and it's done."

Stevenson said he was nervous about bringing his family to "a remote

assignment." But they're content in one of five U.S. housing units located 20 kilometers away. His 7-year-old daughter attends Japanese school, where assistant teachers speak English.

Ammunition specialist SFC Billy McCorkle was an ammunition platoon sergeant with the 608th Ord. Company at Fort Benning, Ga., before coming to Japan. "It's a big adjustment coming from a unit that deploys all the time. Here, you learn more about paperwork and shipping operations. It takes a while to get used to."

But McCorkle said the extra time soldiers have in Kure allows them to savor the present, reflect on the past and make some serious plans for their future military assignments. □